1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

perhaps in Ndulu. In Ngendo the Men's Club had taken over the rocks just behind the headman's household for its meeting-place, but the meetings were only occasional and there was no common meal.

The Village Plan

To speak of the plan of an Umbundu village may seem a contradiction in terms, so haphazard seems the relation of houses, gardens, &c., to each other. Some houses are circular, but the majority are more nearly rectangular in shape. There is a palisade of hardwood sticks surrounding all the village except that side of the headman's household which is adjacent to the rocks used for a club-house. The headman had not bothered to keep up his own part of the fence since his only garden was a small tobacco plot fenced in by itself. The village is itself divided up by the palisades which shut off one compound from another, each compound containing the houses of from one to three households. Between the palisades are paths which lead on to the dancing floor and out of the village. In the village of Sekulu Sikilile there were twenty-five households with thirty-two houses in all. Each house (*onjo*) had its own granary (*onila*), and small chicken-coop built on stilts, and of all the houses only six had separate kitchens (*ocimo*). Nearly every household had separate pens for the pigs, goats, and sheep for the night. At one side of the headman's compound there was a common corral for the nine cattle which the villagers owned. Only the headman had a spirit-hut (*etambo*), used also for a storehouse, for entertaining a guest, and for his own bedroom should he sleep apart from his wives. Within the several compounds were small gardens of tobacco and of maize and beans, and just outside the village were two separate tobacco gardens. Just a few paces to the west was a small patch of wheat belonging to a man in the smallest ward. There was one household of two houses quite outside the palisades appropriately belonging to a man named *Kulika* (meaning 'Being-alone'). The water-holes and pounding rocks where meal was ground were between the several units of the village and were used in common. The fields were off to the east at from thirty minutes' to an hour's walk. The two smaller wards of Ciyanda and Kanjengo were so small that they were like two or three compounds by themselves. The former had six households with eight houses, and the latter

.: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

four households with six houses. The school village had been laid out in rectangular fashion without any palisade and with eucalyptus trees planted around the sides. The school was at the centre and the elder's house at the upper corner. These two larger buildings and one other were built of adobe, while the rest of the twelve houses were of wattle and daub, identical with those in the other wards except that all were rectangular. There were a few very small gardens watered by an irrigation ditch. The people of this village had river gardens, and their fields were mostly to the south between the village and the highway. Just to the east of the main village and beside one of the water-holes, a Roman Catholic catechist had established himself, but as yet he had neither village nor school.

The Villagers

Turning now to the people living in this village, it was interesting to find that all save the households of two former slaves and the Roman Catholic catechist, were related to each other, either by blood or by marriage. Sekulu Cipange of Ciyanda summed the matter up when he said, 'Likuluta Samikanjo (the Protestant elder) is my younger brother (*manjange*), for in our Umbundu country (we) people do not build together (i.e. in the same village) unless we are blood relatives.' In order to determine the exact relationships and other facts regarding the demography of this village, I took the names of all householders and their wives, and inquired their relationships to the elders of the respective wards. This information was supplied by Njomba, a son of Sekulu Sikilile, and by Sekulu Likuluta Samikanjo. In addition to those of the four elders, there were twenty-four households. The relationship of each of the householders to their respective elders may be summarized as follows:

A. *Paternal relatives*		
In Sikilile's village	21	
,, Ciyanda	1	
,, Kanjengo's ward	2	
,, School village	2	
	—	26
B. *Maternal relatives*		
In Ciyanda	1	
,, Kanjengo's ward	1	
,, School village	4	
	—	6

2; McCulloch E-4 (1945-51)1952 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Ovimbundu women braid their hair neatly in strands across their foreheads, and decorate the braids with small blue and white trade beads.(1) 302

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE(2)

Main crops are maize and several kinds of beans. Subsidiary crops include: sorghum, kaffir corn, emmer wheat, manioc, peanuts, squash, sweet potatoes, garden vegetables, a little rice, cotton, sugar-cane and tobacco. Fruit-trees such as the papaya, banana, loquat, tangerine, lemon, peach and apple, are increasingly cultivated, and, to some extent, coffee. Upland fields for the principal crops of maize and beans are cultivated during the rainy season, and, to piece out the harvest, river gardens for secondary crops are used in the dry season. 241

The principal corn-gardens

Traditionally men work with their wives in the heavier labour of clearing new fields, but today the demands of contract labour are such that few are able to help.(3) Before the rains begin in early September, women prepare the fields for planting. If a new plot is to be used, it is first cleared with a small hatchet. Tree stumps are left two or three feet high; after the field has been cultivated for a year or two and the tree-stumps have dried and rotted, they are burned off and cleared away. When the rainy season has set in and the ground is thoroughly wet, the main corn-fields are planted. The ground is dug with a hoe and ridged slightly, the ridges following the contour of the land, so that the rain will not wash away the soil, and so that the moisture will be held. Occasionally irrigation is used, small channels being led from hillside streams to the gardens. Maize is dropped by hand on the ridges, and the seeds covered with the foot. Beans and squash are planted with the corn. In January there is usually a break in the rains, and this is the time when the bean crop ripens. (This is a critical period, since if the dry spell lasts too long the corn crop is blighted, but if it is too short the beans will not ripen.) The vines are pulled up and put in the field hut to dry. Later the beans are beaten out of the pods and stored. 241 [462] [312]

In each field there is a grass hut, which is used as a shelter from showers, as a place for drying beans or corn, and as living quarters when the corn is sprouting. (When a woman decides that it would be more convenient to live by her field, which requires constant guarding against birds, she may live in her field hut with her children for several weeks.) 241 343

As the dry season commences, the corn crop ripens. When it is ripe, it is plucked, dried and shelled, and stored in the *osila*, a granary on posts, for future use. One *osila* is used for each household. When required, the corn is hulled and pounded into the meal which forms the staple food.(4) [251] [252]

(1) Hambly pp.129-32, and illustrations; Childs, personal communication.
(2) Cushman, 1944, pp.72-8; Hambly, 1934, pp.146-8, and Childs, personal communication.
(3) Childs, personal communication.
(4) For a good description of the preparation of corn-meal, see Cushman, pp.77-8.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

argued that the cattle might have been brought along the course of the Zambezi and Kwando there is the objection that there are here several tsetse fly belts. On the contrary, cattle-producing country in the southwest and south of Angola is far more accessible than the Rhodesian plateau.

In the south there is the cultural habit of digging wells, especially among the Vakuanyama; but the Vachokue have not developed this trait. The substrata underlying the sand of southern Angola hold water which serves through the dry season, a fact which is advantageously employed by the cattle-keepers. The Vachokue lack this well-digging habit, and, even if subsurface water were present, the transient Ovimbundu would have lacked opportunity to dig for it when passing through hostile country.

The acquisition of cattle by the Ovimbundu is of great importance, because it is concerned with the grafting of a series of pastoral traits on a culture in no way originally associated with pastoral pursuits. The truth of this will later be made clear by examination of historical and ethnological evidence.

Geographical considerations give a picture of the Ovimbundu situated in naturally fortified country from which they had access to four surrounding areas, whose cultural characters agree well with the determinism of topography and climate. The natural advantages of the central highlands, and the results of contact with each of the adjacent areas, are points which will be developed in appropriate sections throughout the ensuing chapters.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Olungunga is not a sweet manioc, so is not eaten raw. The roots are placed to soak in a stream for three or four days before they are roasted on a fire, after which they may be eaten with impunity. As an alternative the roots may be dried in the sun; they are then pounded into meal which is scattered into boiling water so that a mush is formed. The Umbundu name for this preparation is *iputa viutombo*, meaning "mush of manioc." The leaves of *olungunga* are not soaked in water; on the contrary, they may be cooked as soon as they are gathered, but they must not be eaten when warm. There is no danger in eating them after they have been boiled and have been allowed to become cold. The leaves are served with salt or fat.

All the manioc, with the exception of *olungunga*, is sweet. *Kandona* has roots which may be eaten uncooked, but both leaves and roots are sometimes cooked in water. Other varieties of manioc known as *otetu*, *elemba*, and *esela* are eaten in the same way as *kandona*. Manioc is in use all the year, but the greatest quantity is consumed in November and December, a period when the growing corn is not ripe and the storage supplies have dwindled.

Sweet potatoes are plentiful all the year with the exception of the months of November and December. They are placed in the pot, without removal of the skin, and boiled for a period of twenty or thirty minutes. They are taken out, peeled, and eaten. European potatoes are sometimes peeled and made into a mush. The variety of garden produce naturally depends on proximity to a trading post, a mission, or some other European settlement.

In propagating manioc a stem is cut off from the parent plant which is about three feet high; but probably two or three years pass before the tubers are considered large enough for use. Sweet potatoes are planted in January, but there is very little of this food available in February and March. Toward the end of March or early in April a few potatoes may be ready for consumption.

Peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*, Leguminosae) are planted in October by women who prepare patches of ground which are drilled with holes one inch deep and eight inches apart. One nut is placed in each hole after the shell has been removed. Above the ground small leaves appear. After the flower-stalk withers it has the peculiarity of elongating and bending down. In this way the young pod is forced underground, and the seeds mature a little way below the surface.

Some natives employ irrigation by leading small channels of water from a hillside stream to a garden containing maize and

312 bananas, but one could not say that irrigation is generally practised, even when circumstances permit.

245 The papaya and the banana are increasingly cultivated, but they are by no means generally distributed. Here and there I [249] have seen a little sugar-cane cultivated by natives for their own [244] use. Near the main railway natives may be seen selling their products, which include cabbages and tomatoes. Some natives are today planting the guava tree which yields sweet palatable fruits. The fruits *olosia* are collected from the *usia* tree. When ripe, the fruiit is yellow, round, and about two inches in diameter. These fruiits are gathered in September, and the kernels, which are about the size of walnuts, are eaten uncooked. No fruits are collected for storage. *Olombala* fruits ripen in October, when they are eaten raw.

264 Each wife sends the food which she has cooked in her own kitchen to tthe *onjango* ("council house"). After carrying the food to this house of assembly, where the men meet each evening, the women return to their houses to eat alone, or with the young children.

343 252 [595] When there is a plurality of wives each has her own house and kitchen. Ngonga states that separate kitchens built outside the living houses are becoming more rare. The poor have their kitchens in tthe living room because they cannot provide separate structures for living and cooking.

264 262 252 The first meal is taken between five and six o'clock in the morning, the most usual food being meal sprinkled on boiling water to form a paste which is eaten with sweet potatoes. A mush of beans is eaten at night; generally there is no meal at midday. Three pounds of cooked beans are eaten by a person for one meal. Over the cooking pots leaves are placed to keep in the steam, especially when the pot contains sweet potatoes. I have made a meal from the sticky, gluey paste which results from sprinkling meal on boiling water. The chief objection to this food is the unpleasant quantity of grit in the meal, owing to the fact that it is pounded on the rocks. Mamioc and sugar-cane are chewed at irregular intervals of the day.

262 The amount of meat consumed by the Ovimbundu is small in comparison with the quantity of vegetable food used. This adoption of diiet of a particular kind is largely a matter of habit, and there is no good reason why meat should not form a larger proportion of the ffood supply. The Ovimbundu do not kill their cattle for food though they will eat the meat of oxen which have died from natural causes.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

CHAPTER V

VILLAGE ECONOMICS

The homeland of the Ovimbundu, the Benguela Highland, is mostly over 4,000 feet above sea-level. Rainfall is 50–60 inches a year, and the rainy season is from September to April.[1] In this season after a downpour there is frequently a cooling of the air, and the most intense heat comes just before the rainy season, during the dry spell that occurs in or about February, and just after the rains. Between the middle of May and the middle of July the nights and early mornings are bitterly cold but the days are pleasantly cool. After the middle of July the temperature gradually rises.

The soil of the Highland is poor; the Ovimbundu industriously cultivate beans, manioc, maize, potatoes, and tobacco. Less frequently they have coffee plants, fruit trees, and sisal. Occasionally wheat is grown but the ground is not really suitable. I am told that rice could be grown in the stream valleys. Four field types are recognized by the Ovimbundu—*otjumbo* (garden), *onaka* (stream-valley garden), *embanda* (in ground sloping up from a stream), and *ohya* (a field away from the streams on level ground).[2]

Umbundu country is well supplied with water in streams and rivers, and the Ovimbundu have built irrigation channels wherever possible. Cultivation in the stream valleys, that is, of the *onaka* type of garden, has only been practised since the 1870's or 80's.[3] They are planted in August or the beginning of September, and give crops in December and January. The

[1] For an excellent account of Umbundu habitat see Childs, pp. 1–11.

[2] Albino Alves, *Dicionário Etimológico Bundo-Português*, Lisbon, 1951, Vol. I, p. 639 gives ombanda as a synonym of onaka.

[3] Private information.